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By Pete Kasperowicz

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House lawmakers say President Obama and Congress should take a pay cut if they can't stop automatic spending cuts set to begin in January.

Under a bill offered by Rep. Charlie Bass (R-N.H.) and a dozen other lawmakers, Obama, Vice President Biden and all members of Congress would get an 8.2 percent pay cut if they cannot find a way around the sequester, which will cut federal spending by \$109 billion starting in January.

"We all know the negative impact that sequestration will have, and we also know that we can solve this problem if the House, Senate and the president work together in a bipartisan manner to find a solution," Bass said Wednesday. "If Congress and the president fail to do so, my legislation will simply ensure fairness by applying the same reductions to the salaries of members of Congress, the president and vice president that domestic spending programs will face."

Bass based his salary-cut proposal on the estimated cut that would take place to non-defense discretionary spending under the sequester, which the Office of Management and Budget estimates is about 8.2 percent.

President Obama's annual salary, now at \$400,000, would be cut to \$367,200 under the bill. Vice President Biden's salary, now \$225,000, would be reduced to about \$206,000.

Rank-and-file members of Congress who earn \$174,000 would see a reduction to about \$160,000.

Bass and other sponsors of the bill seem to be banking on the idea that the salary cut might prompt Congress and the Obama administration to quickly find a way around the problem of how to restructure the sequester. But it might not be enough to solve what has so far been an unsolvable problem — Republicans have indicated that they support a restructuring mostly to avoid defense cuts, while Democrats have said they also want to avoid defense cuts, in part by imposing new taxes.

Still, Bass said he was optimistic that some agreement can be worked out.

"I have said time and again that we can find a bipartisan approach to solving these looming problems," he said. "There is still time for Congress and the administration to put partisan posturing aside and work together."

"It is only through compromise that we will achieve real solutions and it's what the people of New Hampshire and our country expect and deserve."

One practical hurdle to passing the Member Pay Reduction and Responsibility Act, H.R. 6438, is time. Members of Congress are only expected to be in Washington for the next two days before leaving to focus on their reelection campaigns. After that, the House has plans to be in for just two weeks in November and another two in December, and much of that time is expected to be spent on the sequester and pending tax increases in 2013.

Co-sponsors on the bill are Reps. Howard Coble (R-N.C.), John Culberson (R-Texas), Bob Dold (R-Ill.), Sean Duffy (R-Wis.), Jim Gerlach (R-Pa.), Bob Gibbs (R-Ohio), Jeff Landry (R-La.), Jim Matheson (D-Utah), Tom Petri (R-Wis.), Jim Renacci (R-Ohio), Reid Ribble (R-Wis.) and Bobby Schilling (R-Ill.).